

Listing of Claims:

This listing of claims reflects all claim amendments and replaces all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application. Material to be inserted is in **bold and underline**, and material to be deleted is in ~~strikeout~~ or (if the deletion is of five or fewer consecutive characters or would be difficult to see) in double brackets [[]].

1-4 (Canceled)

5. (Previously Presented) A method of securing an animal to a fixed object with a securing device, wherein a lead line is coupled to the animal, and wherein the securing device includes a frame and a retaining member coupled to the frame and is mounted to the object, the method comprising:

inserting a segment of the lead line through the frame;

extending the segment of the lead line around the retaining member;

pulling the lead line to bring the lead line into contact with the retaining member to thereby frictionally interlace the lead line with the frame and the retaining member such that a panicked animal can pull a length of lead line through the securing device, wherein the securing device includes a mounting structure coupled to the frame; and

mounting the securing device to the object via the mounting structure before inserting the segment of the lead line through the frame,

wherein mounting the securing device to the object via the mounting structure includes fastening the securing device to the object with an eyebolt coupled to the mounting structure.

6. (Currently Amended) A method of securing an animal to a fixed object with a securing device, wherein a lead line is coupled to the animal, wherein the securing device includes a frame **having an opening** and a retaining member pivotally coupled to the frame such that the retaining member is pivotally movable between an open position and a closed position, and wherein the securing device is mounted to the object, the method comprising:

inserting a segment of the lead line through the ~~frame~~ **opening**;

extending the segment of the lead line around the retaining member; and

pulling the lead line to bring the lead line into contact with the retaining member and to move the retaining member into a closed position, wherein surfaces of the frame and retaining member that contact the lead line are substantially free of surface features that impede smooth sliding of the lead line across the surfaces, **and wherein at least part of the retaining member lead-line-contact surface defines a path configured to urge the lead line toward a periphery of the opening when the lead line is interlaced through the opening and around the retaining member and the lead line is subjected to a tensile load.**

7. (Canceled)

8. (Canceled)

9. (Original) The method of claim 6, wherein an end of the retaining member that is not pivotally attached to the frame is in contact with the frame when in the closed position.

10. (Currently Amended) A method of securing an animal to a fixed object with a securing device via a lead line, wherein the securing device is attached to the object and includes a frame ~~coupled with the mounting structure, the frame~~ including opposing sides defining a closed perimeter with an opening therethrough, and a retaining member **at least partially** disposed between the opposing sides of the frame, the method comprising interlacing the lead line through **the opening in** the frame and around the retaining member, ~~[[and]]~~ pulling the lead line to frictionally engage the lead line with the frame and the retaining member, **and laterally urging the lead line along the retaining member toward the frame in response to a pulling force on the lead line.**

11. (Original) The method of claim 10, wherein the retaining member is pivotally coupled to the frame, and wherein pulling the lead line to frictionally engage the lead line with the frame pulls an end of the retaining member not pivotally coupled to the frame into contact with the frame.

12. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 10, wherein the frame has a ring-like configuration, and wherein interlacing the lead line through **the opening in** the frame and around the retaining member includes inserting a segment of the lead line through **the opening in** the frame and extending the segment of the lead line around the retaining member.

13-14 (Canceled)

15. (New) The method of claim 6, wherein the opening tapers from a central region of the opening towards a location on the frame at which the retaining member is adjacent to the frame, whereby pulling on the lead line increasingly binds the lead line as the lead line shifts sideways along the retaining member toward the periphery of the opening.

16. (New) The method of claim 10, wherein the retaining member is configured to induce a lateral force in the lead line when the lead line is subjected to a pulling force.

17. (New) The method of claim 10, wherein frictional engagement of the lead line with the frame and the retaining member imparts a frictional force on the lead line that increases as the lead line laterally moves along the retaining member toward the frame.

18. (New) A method of securing an animal to a fixed object with a securing device, wherein a lead line is coupled to the animal, and wherein the securing device is mounted to the object and the securing device includes a frame having an opening and a retaining member coupled to the frame, the method comprising:

forming a bight in the lead line;

inserting the bight through the opening;

extending the bight around the retaining member; and

pulling the lead line to bring the lead line into frictional engagement with the frame and the retaining member to impart a frictional holding force on the lead line, and thereby laterally moving the lead line along the retaining member toward a peripheral region of the opening.

19. (New) The method of claim 18, wherein the lead line moves along the retaining member toward a location proximate where the retaining member is coupled to the frame.

20. (New) The method of claim 18, wherein lateral movement of the lead line toward a peripheral region of the opening increases the frictional holding force imparted on the lead line.

21. (New) The method of claim 18, wherein the frictional holding force on the lead line is such that a panicked animal can pull a length of lead line through the securing device.

22. (New) The method of claim 18, wherein inserting the bight through the opening pivots an end of the retaining member away from the frame.

23. (New) The method of claim 18, wherein the retaining member includes a surface configured to engage the lead line, the surface extending at an angle relative to the opening such that a portion of the surface disposed proximate an interior region of the opening is further from the opening than a portion of the surface disposed proximate a peripheral region of the opening.